THE
Dan Smoot Report

Vol. 13, No. 17 (Broadcast 609) April 24, 1967 Dallas, Texas

DAN SMOOT

WITH NO MERCY -- PART I

by Frank Iszak

Frank Iszak, born in Hungary in 1931, was one of a small group of Hungarians who hijacked a Soviet-Hungarian airliner in July, 1956, and made a sensational escape to the West. Iszak came to the United States in 1957, became a citizen in 1963. In 1964, he was given "The Most Outstanding American of The Year" award by the American Legion Auxiliary of California. In 1967, he received the George Washington Honor Medal from the Freedom's Foundation at Valley Forge.

The text of this Report *(and of next week's* Report*) is an abbreviation of a remarkable recording which Iszak has made, relating experiences in communist Hungary and the spectacular events of his escape — and discussing, with spine-chilling truth, similarities between conditions in Hungary during the communist takeover and present conditions in the United States.*

Hungary, 1956 — the hopeless land where I was born and had lived for 25 years — was struggling through one of the darkest years of its thousand-year history.

The people were controlled by their own communist government, and the land was controlled by the Soviet military forces.

July 13, 1956, was a bright summer day — a Friday. A young Soviet soldier, manning a radar station which covered the western part of Hungary, noticed a strange phenomenon: a plane was missing from his radar scope.

It was a Soviet-Hungarian airliner on a daily routine flight. It had taken off from Budapest an hour ago, and should have been approaching another Hungarian city for landing.

The soldier was puzzled: no storm, no clouds, and no plane.

Then he called ground control. Receiving the word, the commander of the base immediately dispatched some MIG 17 jetfighters.

The iron curtain was only 50 miles away. If the airliner were heading that way, the MIGs would force it down. If necessary, the airliner would be destroyed.

THE DAN SMOOT REPORT is published weekly by The Dan Smoot Report, Inc., Box 9538, Dallas, Texas 75214 (office at 6441 Gaston Ave.). Subscriptions: $18.00 for 2 years; $10.00, 1 year; $6.00, 6 months; first class, $12.50 a year; airmail, $14.50. Dan Smoot was born in Missouri, reared in Texas. With BA and MA degrees from SMU (1938 and 1940), he joined the Harvard faculty (1941) as a Teaching Fellow, doing graduate work in American civilization. From 1942 to 1951, he was an FBI agent; from 1951 to 1955, a commentator on national radio and television. In 1955, he started his present independent, free-enterprise business: publishing this REPORT and abbreviating it each week for radio and TV broadcasts available for commercial sponsorship by business firms.

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A half an hour of frantic search failed to turn up anything. The jet fighters returned only to report that the airliner with 25 people aboard had disappeared: not a trace; just a growing mystery.

Three hours later, a West German radio station interrupted its regular broadcast to bring a special bulletin:

"A Soviet-Hungarian airliner landed in West Germany, near Ingalstadt. A small group of passengers hijacked the airplane in midflight over Hungary in a bloody fight. Most of them were hospitalized with no immediate word of the extent of their injuries."

This was the first bulletin of a news story which exploded the next day into headlines all over the world: the most spectacular escape in history.

I was a member of the hijacking team that made the headlines.

In 1956, the iron curtain sealed off Hungary from the outside world. Of every hundred persons attempting to escape, only one got through. Life behind the barbed wire became more unbearable every day, even for those of us who once were slated to be the ruling hierarchy of the land.

It came to the point where a choice between dying in an escape or staying in slavery was very easy.

The only question was HOW?

I was coaching a boxing team in my free time. On that team was George, who later became the leader of our group. He was a fighter pilot before.

Two of us made the decision one night, and the rest was easy: put the team together, design a plan, and have plenty of rehearsals.

But we did have some handidcaps to overcome.

Only George knew how to fly that plane. Aboard the airliner there would be a secret policeman — and we wouldn't be able to tell him from innocent passengers. Above all, it was not simple to board an airliner in communist Hungary.

Yet, our plan was very simple: board the airliner and at one point make a surprise move; knock unconscious all passengers and search them to find the secret policeman; take his gun; go to the pilot's cabin and knock on the door; when the door opened, move in with the gun ready and politely ask the crew to leave the cabin and turn the controls over to George — a plan with as little violence as possible.

For those who would object to any violence against innocent passengers, let me assure you that only on a television show could we have succeeded by saying, "Will the real secret policeman please stand up"?

We boarded the plane around 1:30 p.m., with no questions asked. As the plane took off, I began to look around. There were 7 of us and 14 additional passengers. All 14 of the others looked like secret policemen to me.

An hour later, according to our plans, George stood up in the front and said aloud: "There is the town of Gyor."

Seven people on that plane started a count down to 300 to synchronize our actions. It seemed like the last 5 minutes of my life.

The plane was traveling at 10,000 feet — a quiet, perfect flight.

That count to 300 was as long as a lifetime. My palms started to sweat around 200; the pipe wrench I was holding started to slip out around 250; and when 300 came, I wished I had never been born.

George jumped from his seat, pointed out the window, and yelled: "Look, two jets"!

Everybody looked out the windows.

A gun that George pulled out of his pocket went down on the head of the first passenger. The sharp cracking sound of the breaking skull brought all of us to our feet.

Chaos, screams, blood, and then, silence: 14 passengers were on the floor, and only a few seconds had passed.

We frantically searched the passengers, to find and disarm the secret policeman.

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Then came our first surprise. Nobody had a gun!

We stood there for a moment, completely bewildered. What now?

Then events started moving to a climax.

Somebody from the crew opened the cockpit door to peek out.

It did not take long for him to realize the situation. He withdrew into the cockpit, and locked the door behind him. The crew, in order to keep us from standing on our feet, put the DC-3 into violent maneuvers.

Have you ever been on a plane that is being pushed deliberately into a nose dive? You are not strapped in. The plane begins to accelerate. You have nothing to hang on to. You float inside the plane, hitting the ceiling or the floor, depending on whether the plane is taking a nose dive or climbing sharply.

The inside of the plane became an indescribable shambles. People, knocked unconscious by us moments earlier, were tumbling around, bumping into chairs that came loose, into cargo boxes that were sliding back and forth in the aisle.

The outside door broke open. Things began to fall out of the plane: a piece of luggage, a box, a jacket. At one point, while the plane was in a sharp climb, I was lying on the floor trying to catch something nailed down to hang on to, when I saw my wife sliding by me — unconscious, bleeding, sliding toward that open door!

I grabbed her leg trying to pull her back, but there was a lot of gravitational force to overcome. I grabbed a chair; the chair slowly came loose; and there we were, at the open door — when the plane went into another steep dive, getting frighteningly close to the ground.

Somehow, George had stayed on his feet — the only one. He punched a hole in the cockpit door with a screwdriver, opened the lock, and lurched in.

There were supposed to be four crew members in the cockpit, but George found five. The fifth was the secret policeman — with a loaded gun in his hand. George grabbed him. Joe and Charlie rushed into the cockpit to overpower the crew. There was a desperate, incredible fight in those cramped quarters. By the time George got the policeman's gun and the crew was subdued, the plane was only a few hundred feet off the ground, coming down fast on a cornfield. And the land beneath us was still the land of hopelessness, terror, and darkness. It was still Hungary.

Joe stood behind the first pilot with a gun. George — bleeding from more than a dozen open wounds — took the co-pilot's seat. I stood near him, wiping blood out of his eyes so that he could see those "damn trees that seem to be coming at us."

We had to fly low, just barely missing trees and church towers, in order to keep out of the radar-scope. We knew we were being hunted. I was desperately searching the horizon for the iron curtain which never seemed to arrive.

Then, all of a sudden, there it was: the barbed wire, the machine gun towers, and the barren strip cleared of trees and bushes! It was all there, as if in a slanted picture or a nightmare; and it was running at us.

I thought we would never miss that machine gun tower. But we did, and the plane began to climb. We had crossed the iron curtain, and were flying over Austria.

We could have landed in Austria, a neutral country; but we just did not know what price the Austrians were willing to pay for their neutrality. We wanted to make it to West Germany where the Americans were — our only hope, our only protection.

West Germany was three hours away.

We had no navigation at all — no radio, no contact, no map. We tried to follow the Danube River, flying by heart toward where the sun was shining.

We lost the river. There were big mountains

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on the left, wide plains on the right, and a growing fear in our hearts.

Where were we? George insisted that we were still over Austria, but I could see that he was not sure.

That terrifying question kept pounding in our desperate minds: *where are we?*

Could we have strayed over communist Czechoslovakia, where death would be slow, but certain?

Then the pilot pointed at the gauge: the last 40 gallons of fuel.

In the distance, we saw a strange airport, built in the middle of a forest with no buildings, no hangars, no planes.

We made a landing approach, and there was silence in the cabin — a dramatic silence suspended on the question: *where are we?* Nobody said a word as the plane touched down and came to a stop, on an airfield that seemed like something out of science fiction.

I got out and looked around. There was nothing but trees, the bare, long runway — and the pounding fear of uncertainty in my heart, growing, feeding upon itself.

I went back into the plane. Those of us who did not have broken legs, began to unload the rest.

Here the picture becomes somewhat scrambled in my memory. People were gathering in the distance, yelling and waving at us. I was nursing my wife who was bleeding and could not move. A series of hazy pictures, changing in rapid succession, and then, all of a sudden, things became very bright and clear. Way off, I saw a car coming toward me, and everything else vanished from my view. I could see nothing but the car, which was bringing the supreme crisis in my life. *Where are we?*

The car seemed to move very slowly, but it was coming.

My knees were trembling; my heart was beating in my throat; I was shaking like a leaf.

The car arrived.

Suddenly, all of my strength left me. I sank to my knees, beating my fists on the concrete runway, tears streaming down my face. I tried to get up and run, but I was too weak. I fell back to my knees.

I was 25 years old, and had spent many hours on my knees in my lifetime — praying for freedom. I had lived in darkness, despair, and virtual slavery for a quarter of a century. I had spent many a sleepless night, longing for escape.

And now the car, within reaching distance, and on its antenna, waving softly in the gentle breeze, the American flag — the only true and unmistakable sign of freedom!

Never before had I wept tears of joy. Never before had I had such an overpowering sense of sheer exultation. I cannot describe it.

There, on an empty NATO air base in West Germany, less than a hundred miles from the Czechoslovakian border, that unforgettable Friday afternoon in July, 1956, a former slave struggled to his feet, wiped the tears from his eyes, and realized that he was free.

* * * * *

Next week, I will publish an abbreviated text of Side 2 of Frank Iszak's record, With No Mercy. *He gives a glimpse of life behind the iron curtain, and a sobering commentary on the theme that it not only can happen, but is happening, in America.*

Every person concerned about the future of the American constitutional Republic should hear Frank Iszak's With No Mercy. *It is a long-playing record, and can be ordered from F. I. Associates, 1178 C Street, Hayward, California 94541. Price: $4.48 ($3.98 plus 50¢ for shipping). A dramatic recording, ideal for playing to groups, it will do much good if it gets wide circulation. Do not order from* The Dan Smoot Report.

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